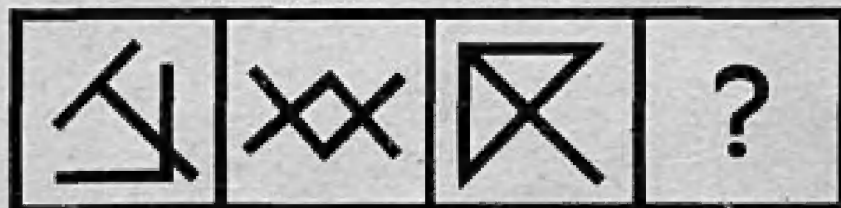


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1

2

3

4

5



HURRY!

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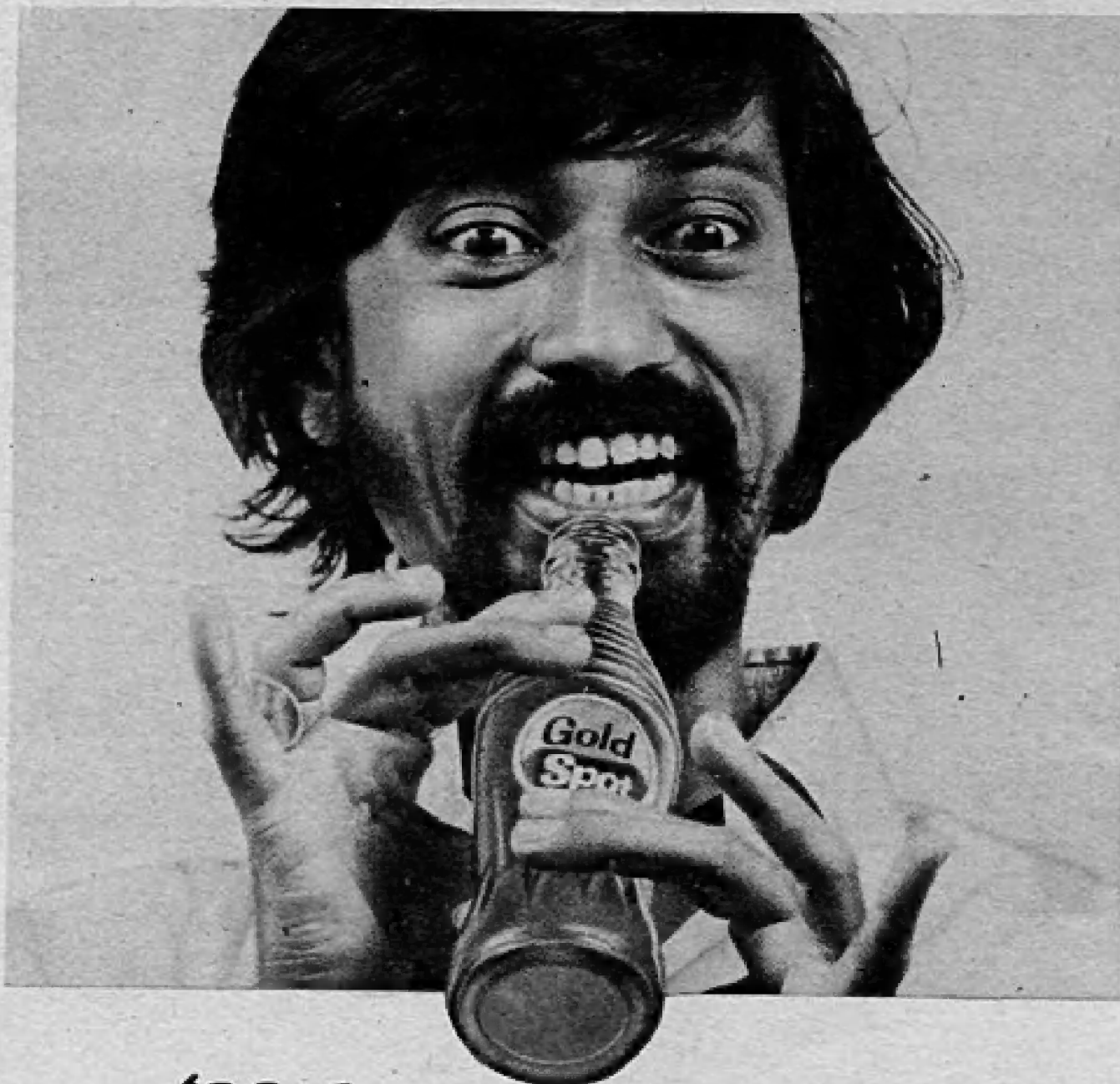
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CHANDAMAMA

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No. 2

Founder : CHAKRAPANI

WHO WAS A BRAHMIN?

There was a time in India when one's caste was not determined by his birth, but by considerations which were deeper. The GITA says that the works of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras were divided according to the GUNAS (qualities) born of their own inner nature, spiritual temperament and SWABHAVA (the true character).

And what were the characteristics of a Brahmin? "Calm, self-control, asceticism, purity, long-suffering, candour, knowledge, acceptance of the spiritual truth."

If one could achieve these traits, he grew into a Brahmin whatever be the caste to which he belonged by birth. **THE LIE THAT WAS A TRUTH**, your story through pictures in this issue, gives us an example of this tradition. Bitahavya, a Kshatriya, turned into a Brahmin through asceticism after he took shelter at the ashram of the sage, Bhrigu. Hence, when Bhrigu said that there was no Kshatriya in his ashram, he spoke the truth, though to one who would know Bitahavya only by his birth, it would have sounded as a lie.

You remember the **SAGA OF SRI JAGANNATH** (June'77), don't you? The descendants of Viswawasu who was not a Brahmin, are considered as most holy Brahmins and they continue to be priests in the famous temple of Puri.

These legends help us to appreciate the spirit of Indian tradition.



आरभन्तेऽल्पमेवाज्ञाः कामं व्यग्रा भवन्ति च ।

महारम्भाः कृतधियस्तिष्ठन्ति च निराकुलाः ॥

Ārabhante'lpamevajñāḥ kāmam vyagrā bhavanti ca

Mahārambhāḥ kṛtadhiyastiṣṭhanti ca nirākulāḥ

The weak-minded gets upset even at the beginning of a small enterprise. But the courageous remain calm even when undertaking to perform a great task.

The Shishupalavadham

उत्तमे तु क्षणं कोपो मध्यमे घटिकाद्वयम् ।

अधमे स्यावहोरात्रं चाण्डाले मरणान्तिकः ॥

uttame tu kṣaṇam kopo madhyame ghaṭikādvayam

Adhame syādahorātram cāṇḍāle maraṇāntikāḥ

Wrath lasts only for a moment in those who are noble; in ordinary people it remains for an hour or two; in the inferior people it continues for a day and a night; with those who are the worst it lasts till their death.

The Samayochita Padyamalika

उत्तमः क्लेशविक्षोभं क्षमः सोढुं न हीतरः ।

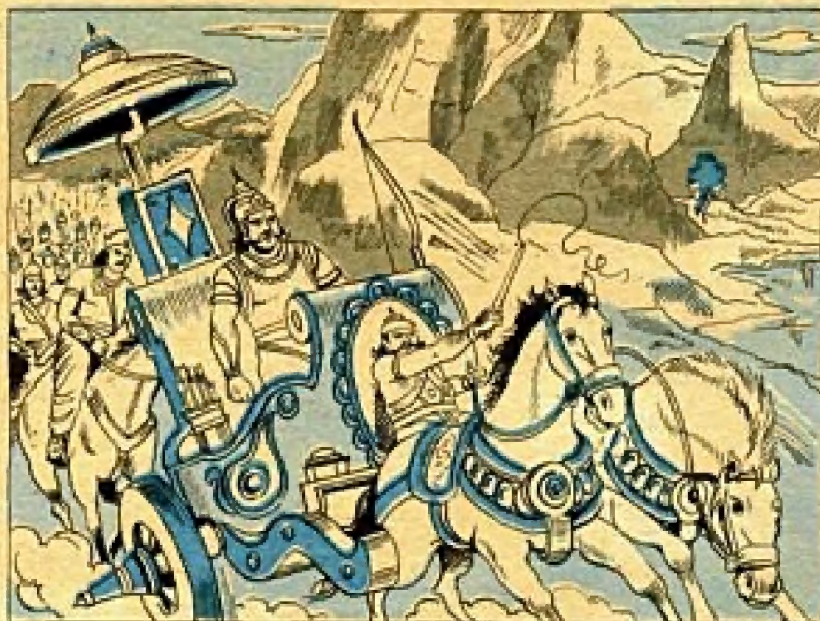
मणिरेव महाशाणघर्षणं न तु मृत्कणः ॥

Uttamaḥ kleśavikṣobham kṣamaḥ soḍhum na hītarah

Maṇireva mahāśāṇaḡharṣaṇam na tu mṛtkaṇaḥ

It is only the best among men that can stand the attack of sorrows and suffering, not the ordinary people. It is only the gem which can stand the rubbing on a grindstone, not a clod of earth.

The Subhasitaratnabhandagaram

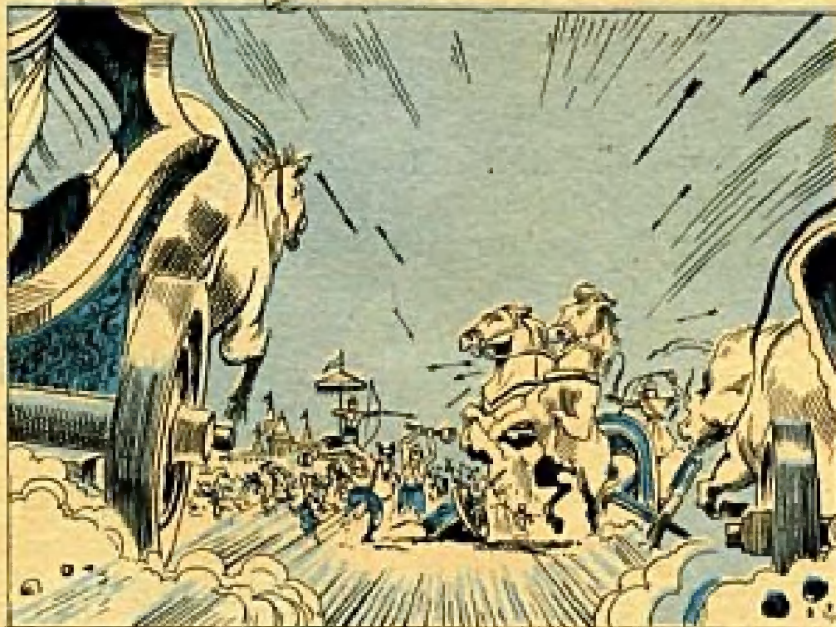


STORY OF INDIA—8

THE LIE THAT WAS A TRUTH

King Bitahavya had a hundred brave sons, each one an able general. Commanding a huge army, Bitahavya and his sons were out for a sweeping conquest of all the kingdoms.

They attacked the kingdom of Kashi and killed its ruler, King Sudeva. Sudeva's son, Dibodas, fought bravely, but had to flee Kashi in the face of the enemy's persistent attack.



Far away, Dibodas built a temporary capital. But Bitahavya's sons rushed at his camp and destroyed it. Dibodas fled, but who would dare to give him shelter since his enemy was so powerful?



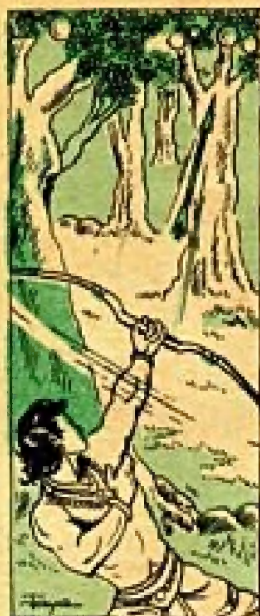
At last, Dibodas and his queen sought refuge at the ashram of Rishi Bharadwaja. The rishi took pity on them and welcomed them. Dibodas felt extremely sad as all the members of his family had been killed and there was nobody to continue his dynasty.

The rishi directed Dibodas to perform a certain *yajna*. This was to ensure that he has a worthy son to continue his line.



A bright son was born to Dibodas. The rishi named the child Pratardana. With the blessings of the rishi, the child grew up to be a brave lad.

Pratardana soon proved himself a prince gifted with rare virtues. With courage and swiftness he mastered the art of fighting as fast as they were taught him.



One day Dibodas summoned his son and narrated to him the story of his misfortune. "My son! It is your duty to avenge my humiliation," he said. Soon after this Dibodas left his body.

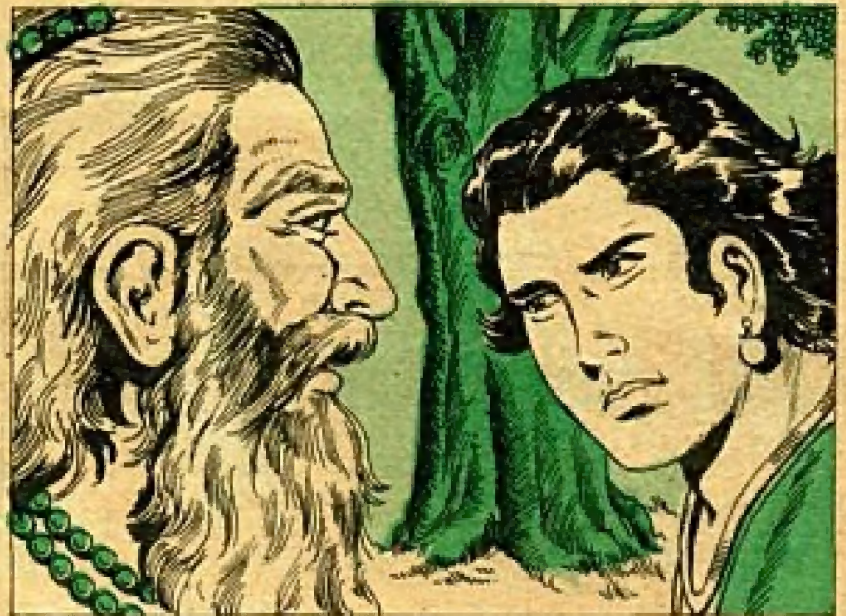
Pratardana soon raised an army and attacked Bitahavya. Bitahavya least expected it. His hundred sons were enjoying themselves. They were all killed. Bitahavya escaped, while weeping over the dead.





It was now Bitahavya's turn to find himself without shelter. However, he reached the ashram of Rishi Bhrigu. The rishi gave him true knowledge and he rose above his sorrow. He stayed on, taking to sadhana.

Pratardana would not rest satisfied until he killed Bitahavya. He reached Bhrigu's ashram and demanded that his enemy be surrendered to him. "Like a true Kshatriya, let him fight with me," he said. "But there is no Kshatriya here; all are Brahmins," replied the rishi.



Pratardana failed to understand how the rishi could speak a lie. But the rishi pointed at Bitahavya from some distance. Pratardana realised that the man he sought had changed into another man; the Kshatriya, by taking to the spiritual path, had turned Brahmin. He went away, his wrath subsided.



LEGENDS AND PARABLES OF INDIA

The Lesson for the Hermit

A young hermit had practised some severe yogic discipline. As a result he had gained some surprising power.

He sat under a tree in a forest and was engrossed in meditation. A crow which sat on a branch above his head suddenly gave out a hoarse caw and that disturbed the hermit's peace. He was so much angry that he looked up and by the power he had mustered reduced the bird to ashes.

It was hot noon, the next day, when the hermit stood before a villager's house and asked for alms from the lady of the house. She was about to oblige him when her husband, looking tired,

returned from the field.

"Wait a little!" the lady told the hermit and gave all her attention to her husband. After she had been assured of her husband's comfort, she turned to the hermit.

"You foolish lady! How dare you ignore a holy guest?" shouted the angry hermit.

"Excuse me and calm down, hermit, I must do first thing first. My husband was tired; hence he deserved my attention immediately. I could see that there was no cause for you to be in a hurry," replied the lady.

"What! You have the audacity to belittle me! Do you



know what I can do?" shouted the hermit furiously.

"I know. You can burn down a poor bird, but not me. Once more I ask you to excuse me and calm down and accept the alms," said the lady with a kind smile.

The hermit stood stunned. How did the lady know about his burning down the crow? She must be possessing even greater power than himself!

The hermit bowed to the lady and said, "Amazing is the power of your vision by which you can see what I had done yesterday. Although you seem to be a worldly woman, you

must be a saint within. Be pleased to pass on some power and wisdom to me."

"I have hardly any worth. If you aspire to gain wisdom, then proceed to meet my guru, whom you can find in a bazar in the town.

The hermit forthwith started for the town, with the address of the woman's guru. But on reaching the particular spot, he found nobody who looked like a guru. Instead, there sat a meat-seller.

The hermit decided to ask the meat-seller about the guru. But the meat-seller kept busy with his customers and he took notice of the hermit only when the customers were gone.

"Come closer and take your seat. You are perhaps directed to me by one of my disciples, a woman with whom at first you had got angry," said the meat-seller gazing at the hermit.

The hermit stood perplexed. Then he managed to say, "No doubt, you are a great seer. But how is it that you have chosen such a despicable vocation? And if you knew that I had come here to meet you, how is it that you did not care to talk to me for such a long time?"

The meat-seller offered the hermit a seat and said smilingly, "Let me answer your last question first. I was attending to my customers. I was duty-bound to see that they got the right measure of meat for their price. Now, so far as my spiritual capacity is concerned, I keep that to myself and I do not like to let others know about it. In selling meat, I am only continuing the trade of my forefathers. I am neither greedy for profit, nor sad at any loss. I have old parents to support. I have to carry on some trade or the other as long as they live. Then I will decide whether or not I should leave the world."

"Do you mean to say that there is no particular benefit in leaving the world as I have done?" asked the hermit.

"That depends! You could

leave the world, but could not leave your anger and reduced an innocent bird to ashes. What is important is to conquer your passions, whether you are in the worldly society or outside it," answered the meat-seller.

The hermit sat silent, his head lowered. After a while he bowed to the meat-seller and asked, "What then is your advice to me?"

"Go home and take care of your old parents. Leaving the world might be good for others, but not for you. You are steeped in ambition and that is why you have achieved some powers. But that is no sure way to God. Do your duty and conquer your passions," were the meat-seller's words.

The hermit prostrated himself to the meat-seller and left for home.





A Fearful Gift

In a village which was situated near a forest lived a hunter. He was quite skilled at his job. He often caught animals and birds without physically wounding them. He sold them to the king's zoo and received handsome price.

He had always a few animals and birds kept in cages in his house.

One morning, a boy met the hunter and said, "I belong to the village on the other side of the forest. In my village lives a woman named Gangabai whose husband claims that she is possessed by the goddess Kali every Saturday. She has started attracting crowds. Her husband is getting richer with

the gifts the people offer. But I know that this is a hoax. If you wish, the hoax can easily be exposed."

"What can I do about it?" asked the hunter.

The boy confided his plan to the hunter. The hunter was happy. He agreed to follow the plan.

It was a Saturday. The hunter visited Gangabai's house. She sat pretending to be in a trance. From time to time she uttered words which nobody could understand. Her devotees had kept before her a number of gifts.

The hunter bowed to Gangabai and said, "O Goddess Kali! Pardon me my audacity.

I used to refuse to believe that you were Kali. But now I have no doubt that you become Kali every Saturday. You will love the gift which I will bring to you the next Saturday. No other devotee could ever have thought of such a gift!"

Gangabai blessed the hunter and he left.

People who had gathered there began speculating about the nature of the gift the hunter was going to present. More and more people heard about it and on Saturday the crowd at Gangabai's house was much bigger than usual.

Gangabai remained sitting in trance for a long time. Where is the hunter and where is his promised gift? She wondered.

Gangabai was about to get up when the hunter came running and prostrated himself to her. But there was nothing in his hands.

"What about the promised hat?" Gangabai demanded hoarsely.

"It is outside your house, O Kali!" replied the hunter.

Gangabai, unable to keep her curiosity under check, followed the hunter. She was followed by the crowd.

Outside the house was a large



cage with a fearful tiger inside!

"O Kali! Here is your vehicle. Please accept this humble gift from me and be please to ride it," pleaded the hunter. Then he advanced to open the door of the cage.

The crowd moved to a safe distance. But Gangabai cried out, "Do not let it come out, I say!"

"But why! You being Goddess Kali, you need not be afraid of your tiger! No, let me bring the beast out. It will be such a heavenly sight for us to see you ride it!" said the hunter as he put his hand on the cage again.

Gangabai turned back and tried to run into her house. But the hunter stopped her and said in a loud voice, "Now you realise that it is not possible to deceive all for all time! Confess that Kali never possessed you. Had she done so, you would not be afraid of riding the tiger!"

Gangabai looked panicky. The people now realised that they had become the victim of a hoax. They too demanded that Gangabai sit on the tiger.

Gangabai's husband stepped forward and tried to pacify the crowd. But that did not work. Both had to confess that they were only acting. Gangabai's husband was obliged to return whatever he could of the gifts the couple had received from the people.

The hunter asked the crowd to disperse and then he returned

home with his tiger.

He met the boy on the road.

"Now, tell me lad, why were you so much displeased with Gangabai that you grew eager to expose the fraud?" asked the hunter.

"I was not displeased with her at all. Rather, I knew that she was a good-natured woman. But her husband has always been a cheat. He had cheated my father of his property reducing us to poverty. When the people of my village realised what sort of man he was, he took to a new trick. He influenced his wife to pretend as possessed by Kali and began to swindle the people through her. I thought it would be a service to the people if the hoax was exposed," explained the boy.

"You are a wise guy," commented the hunter.





THE DEMON AND THE AXE

Near the forest lived a poor wood-cutter with his wife and three sons. The first two sons often accompanied him into the forest and helped him in hewing trees. The youngest, Latu, stayed at home, helping his mother in household chores or playing in the field with deer and peacocks or plucking flowers for the worship of the deity.

Once the wood-cutter fell sick. A week passed. He called his eldest son and said, "If we do not work, we do not eat. The little we saved for a rainy day should run out in another week. Better go into the forest and hew a tree."

The son took the axe and

went into the forest. But he had he set his axe against a tree when he heard a voice that sounded like the bursting of a cracker, "Who is stealing from my forest?"

The young man looked around and saw an ugly demon coming towards his way. "I am a man," he managed to reply.

"That is fine. I like men, I mean, their flesh," said the demon.

The young man sprang up and ran and ran like a rabbit till he was out of the forest. He narrated to his father his encounter with the demon.

"I am happy you escaped, but I am not happy that you forgot



axe in the forest. We people cannot afford to be busy with the tools with which we earn a living," observed the woodcutter.

Next day he sent his second son to the forest. He was to recover the axe. But when he reached the spot where his brother had left it, he found the demon relaxing there with a boulder for his pillow, legs crossed, and caressing the axe, holding it close to his hairy chest.

The young man mustered courage and said, "Hello, demon, will you be good enough to throw that axe at me?"

"Who are you?" asked the demon.

"A man," was the young man's reply.

"Man, are you? You do not know how sweet you taste when sliced by the axe. I've already tried it on two men this morning," said the demon and he straightened up himself.

The young man turned and ran and ran like a squirrel till he was out of the forest.

"Hm!" uttered the wood-cutter upon hearing his second son's report and he said nothing more.

Late in the afternoon Latu stood by his father's bed and said, "Do I have your permission to go into the forest and try recover the axe?"

The wood-cutter gazed at Latu for a long time and said, "Well, you may try if you have the courage!"

Latu walked into the forest carrying nothing with him but a bag and a small knife. The bag hung from his neck and the knife was in his hand.

"Who are you?" asked the demon.

"A human being," replied Latu.

"What is the difference between a man and a human being?"

queried the demon, rather puzzled.

"A human being tastes better, of course!" replied Latu.

"So glad to hear it!" The demon sat up.

"And he tastes best if eaten after being properly fed and given rest for a night," informed Latu.

"Thanks for the tip. Now, you human being, if you come with me to my cave, we can have our dinner together and after you have slept for the night, I can eat you up in the morning, making fine slices of you with this lovely axe!" said the demon excitedly.

"I should love to comply with

your request," said Latu as he advanced towards the demon.

"Now I understand the difference between a man and a human being even better. Two of the men I met in the course of yesterday and today proved nice runners, but nothing more. Being a human being, you are so conscientious!" observed the demon.

It was evening when the demon spread dinner on a high slab of stone. There were fruits and roots of a variety and meat too. Latu pretended to eat the stuffs rapidly. But if he chewed one fruit, he slipped ten into the bag that hung from his neck.



"I see, you can eat quite fast!" commented the demon.

"I am only eager to make myself adequately tasty for your palate," said Latu.

"Fine, fine, human being, eat to your heart's content."

"I can go on eating throughout the night!" said Latu.

When the bag was filled, Latu slit it at its bottom with his knife and the food collected fell down.

"I'm afraid, I cannot go on eating for more than an hour or two," lamented the demon. "I wish I could eat like you! But my tummy just won't hold enough!"

"Demons or human beings, we all have limited tummies. But why don't you do as I do? I just slit open my tummy and the food I had swallowed came out. Now there is space again

for more food. It is so simple!" said Latu.

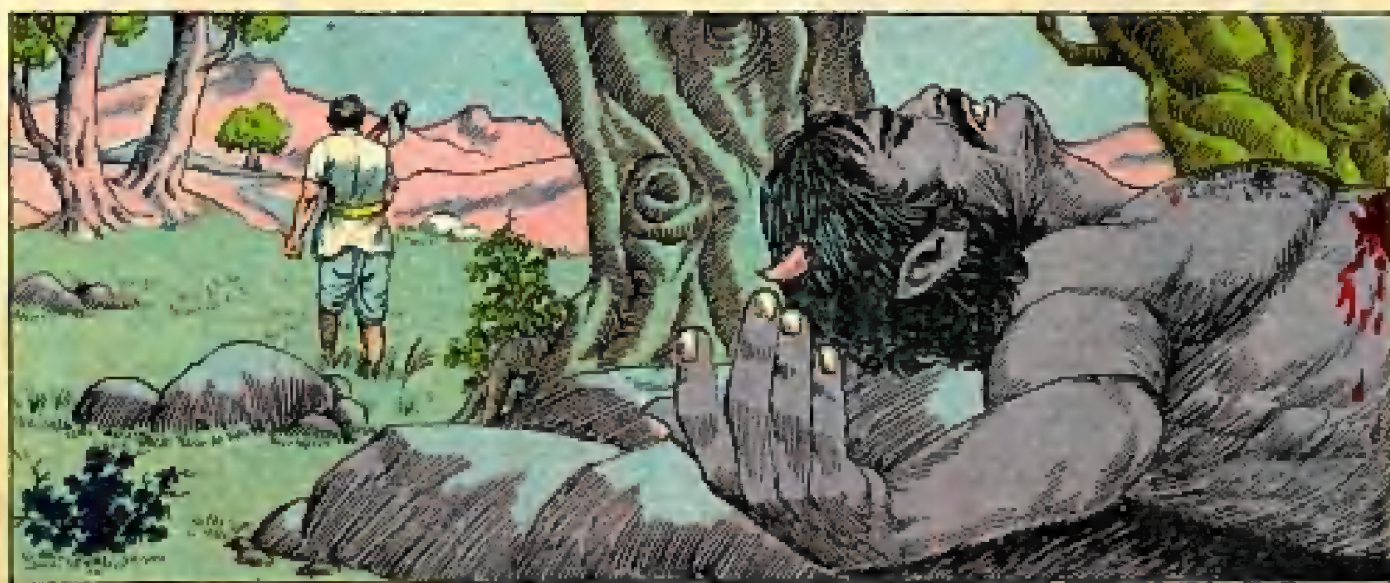
The demon observed the food lying at Latu's feet and looked delighted.

"Strange that we demons never learnt such a simple way to eat more!" said the demon.

"It's never too late to learn. Why don't you apply the axe on your tummy?" Latu inspired him.

"Why not, indeed! It is a lovely axe, after all!" said the demon and he lifted up the axe and brought it down on his tummy.

And he lay dead. Latu got up quietly, picked up the axe and walked home. Next day the three brothers came together and carried home the treasures the demon had collected from his various victims and which lay deposited in his cave.



ACHARYA RAMANUJA

The princess of Kanchi had taken to bed. Experts said that she had been possessed by a spirit. The spirit refused to leave the princess until a great soul had touched her.

Who was that great soul? In the city lived a pundit, who imparted lessons to a large number of disciples. He was the most famous of all the scholars of the time and he must be a great soul.

The pundit—Yadavaprakasa was his name—was summoned to the palace. He arrived there with a retinue of his chosen disciples. He was duly led to the chamber of the princess. With a pompous show, he kept his hand on the princess' head.

But the princess laughed in a weird manner. The spirit spoke through her, "O pundit, it is sheer vanity that makes you think that you are a great soul. Begone! Send your disciple, Ramanuja, to me. Let him but once touch me with his feet. I will leave the princess forthwith."

The king who heard the words

sent for Ramanuja immediately. The young disciple was ushered in. At the king's request he touched the princess with his feet. Lo and behold! the princess sat up erect and looked at all present with surprise, as if she had just woken up from a deep sleep!

This happened hundreds of years ago, in the early part of the 11th century. Ramanuja, born in the year 1017, to Kesava and Kanti of Sriperumbudur, not far from the modern city of Madras, was a teen-ager then, studying in the academy founded by Yadavaprakasa.

Nobody could ignore the brilliance of Ramanuja. In fact, he was named Ramanuja—the younger brother of Rama—because his appearance as an infant reminded his uncle of Lakshmana.

At the academy, he frequently found himself locked in argument with Yadavaprakasa. When the pundit gave a wrong meaning to a line from the scriptures, Ramanuja corrected him in the faith that that would

please the pundit. But the contrary happened. The pundit was extremely displeased, so much so that he intended to harm the disciple even physically. He led his students in the direction of Kashi, planning to wreck vengeance on Ramanuja while abroad. They walked for several days. Then, one evening, while they camped near a forest, another disciple privately informed Ramanuja of Yadava-prakasa's mischievous scheme and pleaded with him to escape.

Ramanuja slipped into the forest and soon lost his way. Kanchi was far away. He did not know how to return there. Suddenly he met a hunter and

asked him the way out of the forest. The hunter beckoned the young man to follow him. They walked till it was dawn. Then the hunter sat down under a tree and asked Ramanuja to fetch water for him from a nearby well.

But the hunter was not there when Ramanuja returned with water. Ramanuja looked for him for some time and then turned towards the nearby locality. Imagine his surprise when he found out that he had already arrived at Kanchi!

Who was the hunter? How could he make Ramanuja cover so many days' way in a few hours? It is for us to come to



our own conclusions. So far as Ramanuja was concerned, it was the Lord in disguise that led him to Kanchi.

At Srirangam lived a celebrated seer, a great devotee of Vishnu, Yamunacharya. On a visit to Kanchi, his eyes had fallen on Ramanuja. Later he felt a strong urge to teach that bright young man his own philosophy and to choose him as his successor. He sent an emissary to Ramanuja who responded to the call with joy. But as luck would have it, before he entered Srirangam, he saw a large crowd on the river Kaveri and on inquiry learnt that Yamunacharya was no more. His dead-

body had been brought to the river-bank for the last rites.

Ramanuja went closer to the seer's deadbody and observed that three fingers of the seer's right hand remained firmly closed. He asked the seer's disciples if their master had expressed some desires which were yet to be fulfilled. They said that he had indeed wanted to see three things done. They were, an exposition of the Vaishnava faith written, and the memory of two great Vaishnava saints of the past duly commemorated.

Before the gathering, Ramanuja took an oath to fulfil all the three desires of the departed



seer. Instantly the clenched fingers of the corpse opened up! The crowd had no doubt about Ramanuja's greatness.

Ramanuja returned to Kanchi and turned an ascetic. He was ever eager to know more and more. Such was his patience that he approached a certain teacher, Goshthipurna, to know the meaning of a doctrine and was turned away seventeen times. But, undaunted, he visited the teacher even for the eighteenth time and the teacher was pleased to satisfy him.

Soon after taking to the ascetic way of life, Ramanuja went over to Srirangam and lived there as the head of the Vaishnava community. His great philosophical work, *Sri Vasya*, attracted the attention of more and more scholars and his influence grew ever wider. The faith he preached, after Yamunacharya and some other Vaishnava saints, was known as the *Visistadwaita*. According to this, although God was one, He could manifest as many. Through *Bhakti* (devotion) and *prapatti* (surrender) one could realise God.

As Ramanuja became popular, some people of other faiths grew bitterly jealous of him.

King Rajendra Chola II, who was a believer in the supremacy of Lord Siva, found in Ramanuja a challenge to his faith, for Ramanuja preached the supremacy of Vishnu. The king sent for the saint. But the saint's disciples were suspicious of his motive. They did not allow Ramanuja to go. Instead, one of his dear disciples, Kuresa, went to meet the king at Chidambaram. Some religious bigots who surrounded the king not only humiliated Kuresa, but also plucked out his eyes.

Sensing the king's wrath, Ramanuja left Srirangam and travelled to Tondanur, the seat of the Hoysala king, Bitti Deva. The king and the queen soon came under the saint's influence and turned Vaishnavas. Ramanuja changed the king's name to Vishnu Vardhana.

Ramanuja had widely travelled and established monasteries in various religious centres of India. After the death of Rajendra Chola II, he returned to Srirangam amidst great rejoicing of the people of the town.

He left his body in 1137, after bringing about in the country a great upsurge of the Vaishnava faith.

THE STRANGE MUSICIAN

King Vikram defied the storm and the weird laughter of the spirits and returned to the lonely tree at the centre of the cremation ground. He then climbed the tree and brought down the corpse.

But as soon as he began to walk with the corpse on his shoulder, the vampire that had possessed the corpse observed, "O King, I have no words to praise you for your braveness and perseverance. You are destined to be rewarded with something most precious. But, I hope, you will not prove yourself to be as whimsical as Gunkirti and abandon the reward when it comes to you. Let me tell you the story, for, that should divert your attention from your labour."

The vampire went on: Long, long ago, there lived a highly gifted musician, a wizard in Veena, named Sadanand, on the bank of the river Sonavati. His fame had spread far and



wide and many kings had offered to make him their court-musician.

Sadanand, however, chose to remain where he was. But he gladly accepted students aspiring to learn playing the instrument from him. His disciples, hundreds in number, were scattered all over the country and some of them became quite famous too.

As Sadanand grew old, he stopped accepting new students and lived a retired life.

One day, a young man named Gunkirti met him and expressed his urge to learn Veena from him. Sadanand advised him to

go to any of his gifted disciples who had taken to teaching Veena.

"O great master, you have no doubt produced several gifted musicians. But those who have heard you play know that none of them has mastered your perfection. Nothing short of a training from you can satisfy me," said Gunkirti.

Sadanand was moved by the young man's ardent aspiration and sincerity. He accepted Gunkirti as his disciple.

Now that Sadanand had no second disciple, Gunkirti had all his attention. Soon Sadanand developed a great liking



for Gunkirti—his last disciple—and looked upon him as his son.

But, as luck would have it, Sadanand suddenly took to bed. A few days passed. Gunkirti did his best to bring his guru back to health. But the young man's efforts seemed to go in vain.

One evening Sadanand called Gunkirti to his bedside and said, "My son, I am about to depart into the other world. It is a pity that your training could not be complete. However, I will give you something which nobody else could have ever dreamt of getting. From my forefathers, I inherited a Veena

which has a magic quality. Even if a novice plays it, he would sound like a highly skilled musician. With the instrument you can soon establish yourself as a great artiste."

Sadanand told the disciple where the Veena was kept and closed his eyes forever. After performing the guru's last rites, Gunkirti discovered the instrument and played it. He could hardly believe his own ears when he heard the sound. It was so enchanting!

He proceeded to the king's court and prayed that he be given an audience. The king agreed—and no sooner Gunkirti





began playing than he exclaimed, "Wonderful! Wonderful!"

The king, the queen, the princess, and the courtiers heard Gunkirti again and again, but were never satisfied. Needless to say, he was at once appointed as the chief musician of the court and was given high honours.

But when young aspirants came to learn from him, Gunkirti pleaded his inability to teach them and directed them to some other disciple of his late guru.

And it was rather surprising that he never looked as happy as he should, with all the honour and the position!

The king and the queen liked Gunkirti not only for his musical talent, but also for his noble character and sharp intelligence. One day the king told him privately, "Gunkirti, the princess desires to learn Veena from you. And, I must say, she is fascinated by you."

Instead of feeling elated, Gunkirti kept quiet. The king concluded that it was only modesty that made him behave like that.

But the same night Gunkirti left the palace and walked on and on till he reached his guru's house on the river. Then he dashed the magic Veena on a stone and threw the shattered instrument into the river.

He lived there and meditated in the guru's room and devoted himself to the practice of music on an ordinary Veena for long hours everyday. The king got all the information about his actions, but he did not disturb him.

Two years passed. One day Gunkirti left the village and proceeded to the palace. He met the king and said, "Pardon me for my conduct, my lord, I am now willing to teach the princess the art of playing Veena."

The king welcomed Gunkirti and restored him to his old position. Gunkirti undertook to teach not only the princess but also other deserving aspirants. A year later he was lucky enough to marry the princess.

The vampire paused for a while and then asked in a challenging tone, "Tell me, O King, why was Gunkirti not happy with his achievement? Why did he destroy the magic instrument? Why was he not accepting any disciple? What made him change his mind? If you can, but do not answer, your head would roll off your neck!"

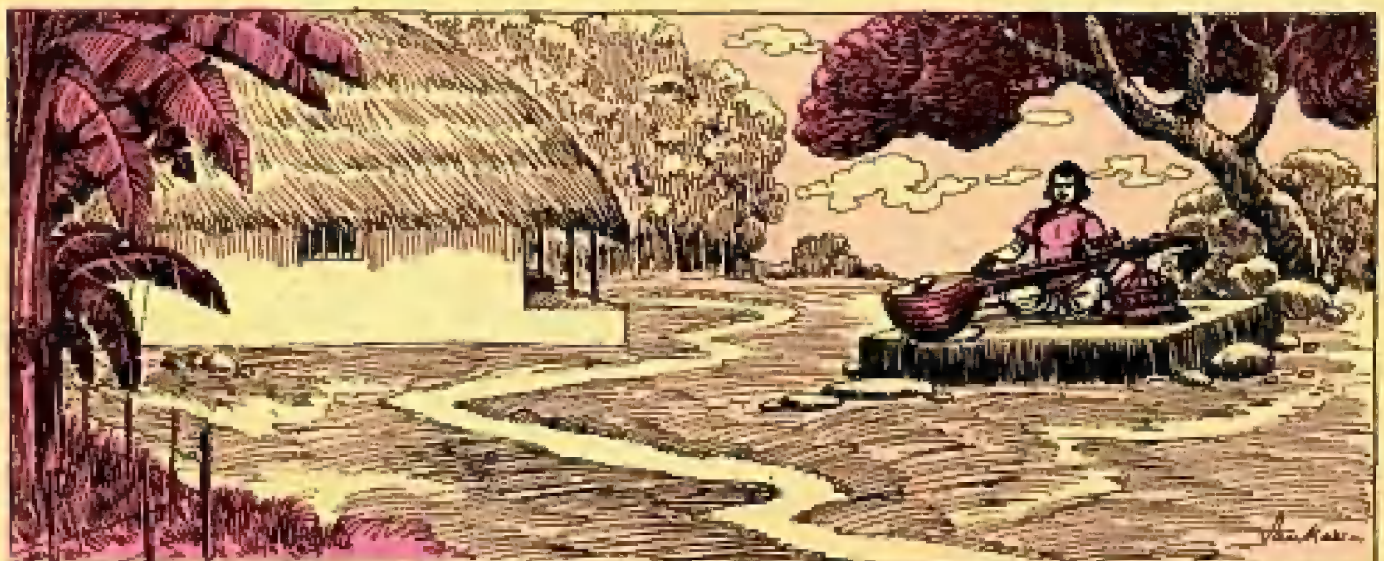
Answered King Vikram, "Gunkirti was not a man to be happy with fame. A true artiste, he desired perfection. What brought him fame was not his achievement, but the virtue of

the magic instrument. That is why he had no happiness.

"He destroyed the magic Veena because it would have been impossible for him to check the temptation for playing it as long as it was with him. His talent could flourish only on the ordinary Veena which all the artistes played.

"He refused to accept disciples because he did not consider himself worthy as a teacher. But when he realised after two years of strenuous practice and meditation that he had achieved perfection, he had no hesitation in teaching others."

As soon as King Vikram concluded his answer, the vampire, along with the corpse, gave him the slip. In the intermittent lightning, the king saw his way and walked towards the tree again.





THE CURE FOR SUBIR!

In a certain village lived a young man named Subir. He was reasonably intelligent, but his greatest weakness was, he was extremely susceptible to flattery.

If others were not aware of it, at least the old couple who lived in the neighbourhood knew it very well. From time to time the old man would meet Subir and say, "Yours is the first face I saw this morning. I knew that it was going to be a fine day. And so far everything has gone very well except that just now I am in need of a hundred rupees. But I know, with a generous man like you as my neighbour, what have I to worry for? Well, I will not keep your money for more than a month!"

Subir would at once hand over the amount.

At the end of the month it

would be the old woman, instead of the old man, who would meet Subir. With a broad smile she would say, "My husband is worried because he is not in a position to pay back the loan. But I told him that it would be an insult to a great man like Subir to think that he would mind the small default on our part."

Subir would be very happy. He would ask, "Please do not worry. And do not hesitate to ask me for any help whenever necessary."

"How can I hesitate before you? We are in badly need of another hundred rupees and we will pay both the amounts together," the woman would say and depart with the money.

In a few months the couple borrowed about five hundred rupees from Subir.

Subir's newly wed wife, Susheela, realised that the couple was out to swindle Subir taking advantage of his naivety. She felt sad, but she did not know what to do.

One day her maternal uncle, who was well known as a clever lawyer, visited them. Susheela told him in private all about the old couple's conduct.

At night, after their dinner, the uncle told Susheela in Subir's presence, "My daughter, you are lucky to have a husband as clever as Subir. A cousin of mine who was of Subir's age became poor by lending all his money to all sorts of people. But look at Subir. He has increased his late father's property."

"But my husband too is in the habit of giving loans," said Susheela and she narrated the

transaction between Subir and the old couple.

The uncle laughed and said, "You foolish girl, what do you know of Subir's motive? With age and experience, I can appreciate what the wise Subir means to do. He is only using the old couple as a bank. Before the first anniversary of your marriage, he will oblige them to pay back the entire amount so that he can buy a pair of gold bangles for you—or is it necklace that you have in mind, Subir?"

"Necklace, sir!" said the flattered Subir.

"I will come on the auspicious day and see the necklace myself," said the uncle.

Within a week Subir compelled the couple to return his money and bought with it a fine necklace and waited for the uncle to come and appreciate it.





DAVID COPPERFIELD

Some day in the early years of the last century, a child was born at Blunderstone, England, whose father had already died. However, there was a woman nearby, Aunt Betsy, who was sure that the child would be a girl and that it would bear her name!

But the child was found to be a boy. The doctor who announced the news to Aunt Betsy narrowly escaped being hit by her. Aunt Betsy, in a huff, left for her home at Dover.

The child, David, grew up under his pretty mother's fond care. But his happiness was short-lived. One day, on his return from the nurse Pegotty's home, he was told, "Master David, you have got a pa!"

His new 'pa', Mr. Murdstone, the gentleman whom his mother had married, was a tyrant. He

divested David of all his freedom and caned him heavily. One day the desperate child bit his step-father's cruel hand. As a punishment he was sent to a school where a placard was pinned to his back. It read, "Take care of him. He bites."

David's mother suffered with the son, but was too weak to protest. Soon she died, leaving David to the mercy of Murdstone.

Murdstone sent David to earn a living for himself in London. In a gloomy, rat-infested room, the ten-year-old boy had to pass long hours pasting labels or fitting corks on wine bottles. However, he found a sympathetic soul in Mr. Micawber, at whose house he was lodged. Mr. Micawber had no more hair on his head than there was on

an egg, but his heart was full of hopes. Sinking in misery, he always thought that "something will turn up!". He persisted in this optimism even when he was thrown into jail for default in paying his debts.

Sick of his life in London, the little David began walking towards Dover and after five days reached his destination, Aunt Betsy's house, tired and dirty. Aunt Betsy washed him and fed him and later sent him to a nice school. After gradua-

ting, David studied law and married Dora, the daughter of a lawyer.

David had still to go through many experiences and meet many strange characters. Dora died quite early, but soon David was to have another sweet mate in Agnes.

David Copperfield, the most popular novel of the best loved English novelist, Charles Dickens (1812-1870), was to a great extent influenced by the author's own life.





THERE IS A TIME FOR EVERYTHING

King Udarsen had made many rules and laws for the benefit of his subjects. But he was surprised to note that the common people of his land were not happy; his poor subjects were growing poorer.

Everyday reports about some discontent somewhere in his kingdom reached him. He was naturally, quite upset.

The king wanted to find out the cause of this malady. He asked one of his trusted friends, Swetaketu, to study the situation and report to him.

Swetaketu travelled across the land and found that those who caused misery to the people were the very persons who exercised a great influence on the

king. They were the friends and relatives of the king's ministers and courtiers. They had in their service the land's foremost educated and intelligent men. These men wrote excellent articles praising the king and his officers and the writings were presented to the king who was very happy reading them. When they came to know that Swetaketu had been appointed by the king to study the condition of the land, they tried to influence him too, through gifts and flattery. At the same time they warned him indirectly that if he reported against them he would be in danger.

Swetaketu realised that the time had not come to expose

these corrupt people. When asked by the king, he replied, "My lord! I fail to understand why there should be so much misery in our land with so many gifted people living among us. For instance, there are people who can transform sands and pebbles into rice, or plain water into milk. There are devotees of a certain goddess who can enrol the services of the devotees of another goddess!"

The king was happy with Swetaketu's comment.

But his happiness was not to last. The land was threatened with a famine and the king was much worried. He asked Swetaketu, "Who is the fellow who can transform sands and pebbles into rice?"

"Dhanagupta, the chief rice-merchant of the kingdom, my lord," replied Swetaketu.

Dhanagupta was summoned to the court. The king received him with courtesy and said, "You alone can come to the rescue of my people at this crisis. I will arrange for as much sands and pebbles necessary. Please transform them into rice!"

"What do you say, my lord? How can I do such a miracle?" asked Dhanagupta with great



surprise. The king was annoyed and he at once made him confront Swetaketu.

"My lord, I know for certain that a man named Chandraverma supplies sands and pebbles of a fine variety to Dhanagupta and Dhanagupta sells them after changing them into rice," answered Swetaketu.

Dhanagupta looked pale at this disclosure. He kept quiet. The king grew suspicious.

The king himself paid a surprise visit to Chandraverma's godown. He found there heaps of sands and pebbles. Upon investigation he learnt that Chandraverma supplied the stuff to Dhanagupta who mixed them

with rice at the ratio of one bag of them to nine bags of rice!

"If a bag of sands and pebbles, mixed with nine bags of rice, can make ten bags of rice, should we not conclude that the bag of sands and pebbles turned into rice? The same happens to plain water which, mixed with milk, becomes all milk! Such miracles take place in regard to several other things," said Swetaketu and he added, "The devotees of Lakshmi, I mean the wealthy merchants, enrol the services of the devotees of Saraswati, I mean the educated people, and through them influence the administration and pass on as gentlemen in the society. This is the root of the evil."

"Why did you not tell all this to me earlier?" asked the king.

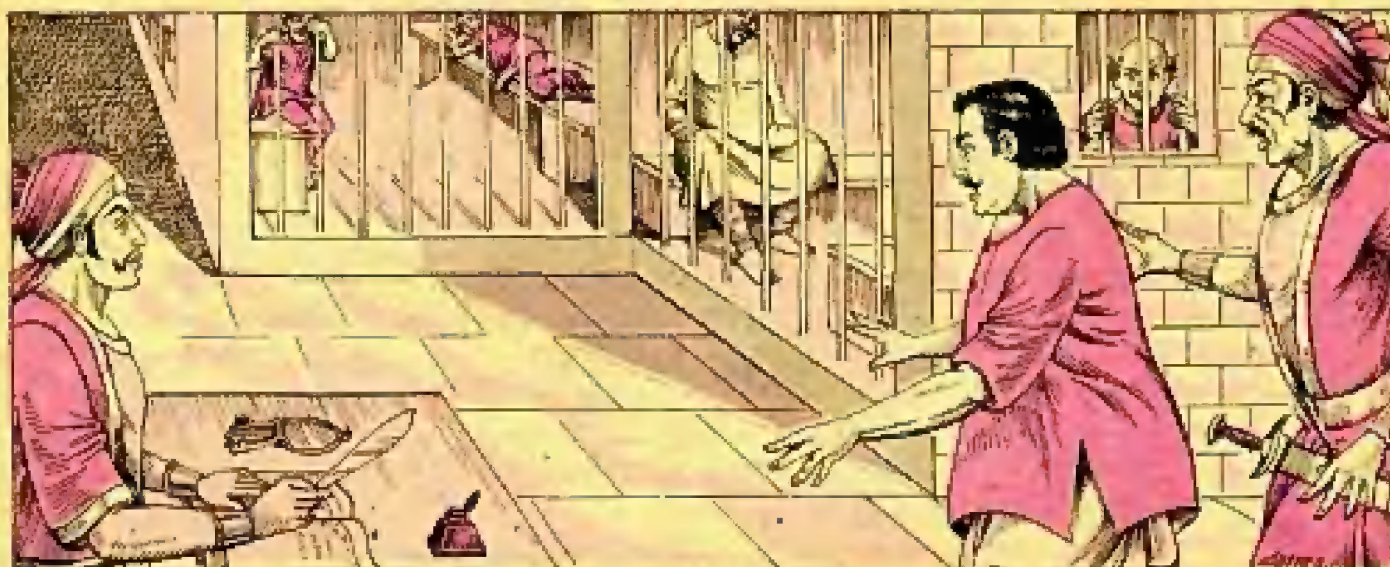
"My lord, there is provision

for punishment for one who breaks the law. But these people are so powerful that they break the law and go unpunished. You have made the law. But you seem helpless before them. In other words, they are more powerful than you. Had I gone against them, I would have been in danger," said Swetaketu.

"How then do you say everything now?" asked the amused king.

"Because the crisis has made you determined to trace the root of the evil. You will not be influenced by their agents," explained Swetaketu and he added, "There is a proper time for everything!"

The king threw the corrupted traders into jail and gave all attention to set his administration right.





The World of Magic

AN EPISODE IN THE FOREST

The chieftain of the tribal inhabitants of the forest of Singivan was murdered by one of his kinsmen, Chengi by name. The chieftain's wife, along with her infant son, Babul, escaped the enemy's net in time. They were guided to safety by a faithful bodyguard of the chieftain.

They were given shelter by an old villager who lived on the outskirts of the forest. The villager was an old friend of the murdered chieftain and he never disclosed the identity of his guests to anybody.

Years passed. Babul grew up to be a brave and bright lad.

One day his mother fell sick.

Her condition deteriorated and a time came when she realised that her days were numbered.

One evening, when nobody else was nearby, she told Babul, "My son, you are no ordinary boy, but a prince. Your father was the chieftain of the forest of Singivan. He was treacherously murdered. I reveal all this to you with the hope that you will be able to dethrone the usurper and occupy your rightful place. There should be many people in the forest who can be moved to rebel against the usurper if you can prove to them that you were the prince. The proof is..."

Unfortunately Babul's mother breathed her last before she had



completed the sentence. Babul broke down. But a courageous boy that he was, he recovered soon. Now his sole ambition was to do as his mother had wished.

One morning he braved into the forest, all alone. Suddenly a man riding a giraffe and adorned with the skin of a lion and a pair of horns confronted him.

"Who are you?" demanded the giraffe-rider, pointing his spear at Babul.

"I am not your enemy. Why do you treat me in such a manner? If you get down and listen to me, I will reward you with

this ring," said Babul as he removed a ring from his finger.

The stranger got down and took the ring in his hand. Next moment his eyes grew rounder and he looked at Babul with great wonder.

"Who are you?" he asked and then lowering his voice, he said, "This ring bears the symbol of our late chieftain. Where did you get this?"

"I will answer you, but not here," said Babul.

The stranger, whose name was Dingu, led Babul to his house. In a closed room, Babul told him who he was. Dingu prostrated himself to Babul and informed him that it was his father who had guided the chieftain's wife and the infant Babul to safety. When the usurper, Chengi, came to know it, he buried his father alive!

Babul gathered that Chengi had become a tyrant and that the forest-dwellers hated him. But nobody dared to oppose him because he suppressed all opposition ruthlessly and cruelly. He always kept himself surrounded by a group of *tantriks*. People thought that the *tantriks* would do great harm to him who would go against the tyrant.

"What about the chief priest of the forest?" asked Babul.

"His sympathy is with your late father," informed Dingu.

At night, Dingu and Babul met the priest secretly. They remained together for a long time.

Next day, the priest called a meeting of all the leading persons of his tribe. Among them were even some of the officers of the usurper.

"Our goddess appeared to me in my dream and said that she has a message for all of you hidden in her cave. But she asked me to tell you that you must take a vow to do as she has wished before you know what the message is," said the priest.

All took the necessary vow.

The priest led them to the cave and soon discovered some folded slips of paper lying behind the deity. She asked the tribal leaders to pick up one slip each.

They unfolded the slips and scanned them. But nothing was written on them.

"It cannot be so. The papers must show the message," said the priest and he lit a fire while reciting the deity's name and asked the leaders to hold



their papers closer to the fire.

As they did so, on each slip emerged a faint message: "The chieftain's son, Babul, is still alive. His father's throne must become his!"

"But where is Babul? He is supposed to have died!" someone observed.

"Here I am!" announced Babul as he came out of a dark nook.

There was a stunned silence for a moment. Then one of the officers said, "There should be a mark under your left arm. I had myself stamped there the heated seal with your dynasty's symbol as soon as you were



born—if you are truly the prince!”

Babul came near the fire and raised his left arm. Indeed, the mark of the royal seal was there!

Before the goddess all took the oath not to rest until the usurper had been dethroned. And they achieved the goal before long, raising a carefully planned rebellion.

Babul understood that the proof about which his mother

wished to brief him was this mark!

And so far as the slips of paper showing the message were concerned, the message had been written on them with a grassroot dipped in onion juice. Letters written with onion juice remain invisible. But when the paper is brought closer to fire, they emerge miraculously before the reader's eyes.

Mr. A. C. Sorcer, Magician

A proud father announced to his guests, "My little son is going to be a great scientist in future."

"How did you know?" asked the guests.

"He has already proved that a fly hears through its legs. He conditioned a fly to hop when he would command 'hop!' Then he cut one of its four legs. It still hopped when commanded. He cut two of its legs. Even then it hopped, obeying his command. It made an attempt at hopping even when left with only one leg. But when all the four legs were gone, it would not hop though repeatedly commanded. Thus my son proved that the fly could not hear his command with all its legs gone!"



VEER HANUMAN

Veer Hanuman, assuming a diminutive form, crossed the portals of the demons' fort in Patala Lanka. Soon he could hear a hullabaloo and proceeded in the direction whence the noise came.

He crossed several apartments, one after another. They were gaudily decorated with precious stones and gold.

Before long he stood in front of a huge cave which had been sculptured to look like a sanctuary. Jewels of different hues were set on the pillars at its entrance and demons were busy heaping a variety of food-stuff for offering them to their goddess, Kali. They were in a jovial mood and many of them were engrossed in singing and

dancing.

Hanuman could understand that the demons were preparing for a festive worship of their goddess. Everybody looked excited.

The cave had a lower chamber which was kept shut. However, Hanuman soon found a small hole and through it sneaked into the dark chamber. There he saw the huge and awful image of the goddess of the demons.

Hanuman stood before the image and demanded, "Tell me, O Goddess, do you really wish Rama and Lakshmana to be sacrificed to you?"

The answer came in a solemn tone, "Know this, Hanuman, that Mahiravana is appoa-



ching his last hour. Don't you worry. Your mission will be crowned with success!"

Hanuman leaped up in joy. He then hid behind the image, waiting to see what the demons would do next.

The entire fort was in a festive mood. Preparations were afoot for sacrificing Rama and Lakshmana as well as for Mahiravana's marriage with Chandrasena. A demoness named Kantaki who had been appointed as Chandrasena's custodian, was bedecking her with ornaments. Planting slaps on her cheeks from time to time, Kantaki was teasing her and was narrating to her the glorious

deeds of Mahiravana.

Great was the agony of Chandrasena. Although helpless; she had the faith. That God will come to her rescue. She bore with all the humiliation headed upon her by the ugly and cruel Kantaki. To all the abuses and provocations uttered by the demoness, she never replied.

Soon Rama and Lakshmana were seen being led towards the temple. They had been made to stand like statues and bound to poles and were carried on a cart which was being drawn by a pair of snake-monsters. The demons, dancing, frolicking and shouting, were arrayed in a procession behind the cart.

Upon hearing the noise, Chandrasena could guess what the matter was. She pulled herself from Kantaki's clutch and ran towards the street. Kantaki failed to check her.

When Chandrasena saw how Rama and Lakshmana had been decorated as sacred objects to be sacrificed before Kali, she shrieked and fainted.

The furious Kantaki began to whip Chandrasena even as she lay unconscious. Then the demoness dragged her into a safe chamber in the fort.

Kantaki being the chief pries-

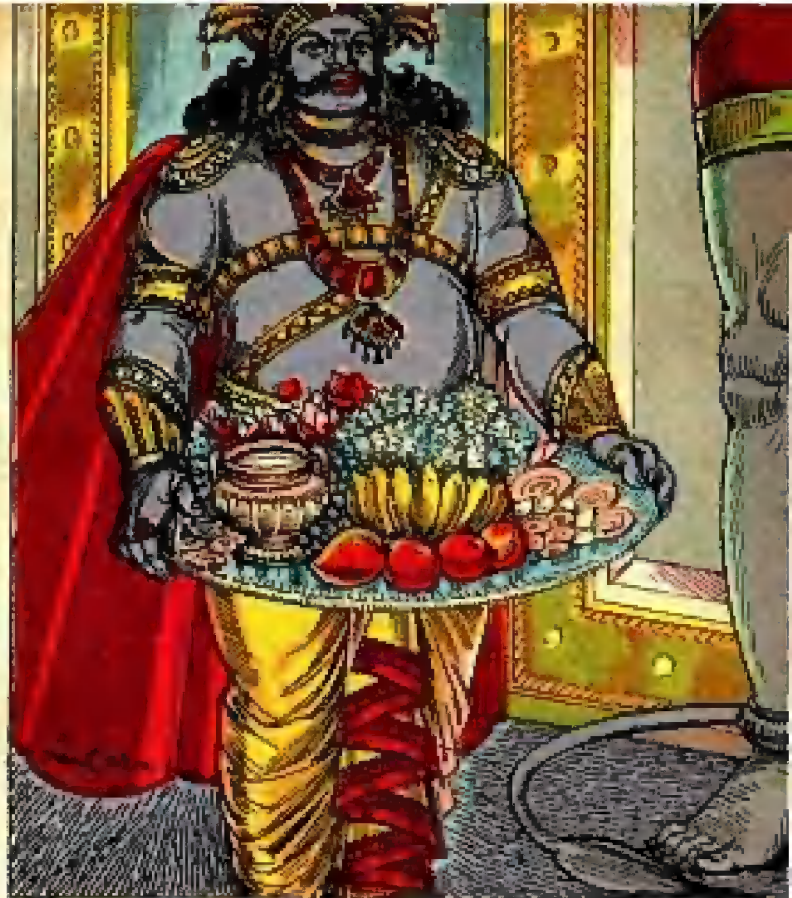
tess in the cave of Kali, could not wait for Chandrasena to regain consciousness. She hurried to the cave, for, it was for her to offer the wine to Kali, which was to be drunk later by Mahiravana, Ahiravana and other demons.

As soon as Kantaki arrived in the cave, the ritual began. The demons, at her direction, poured wine into the lower chamber through the hole. Hanuman felt disgusted at the flow of wine. In a thunderous voice, he said, "Listen, you demons, stop pouring wine. Instead, pour some milk."

The demons in the upper chamber heard the message in stunned silence. They failed to understand the unusual preference of the goddess for milk. Those who were eagerly waiting to drink the wine after it had been offered to the goddess were no doubt disappointed.

Rama and Lakshmana too heard the voice that rose from Kali's cave. Rama looked at Lakshmana and smiled. But Mahiravana was quite surprised. He asked Ahiravana, "Why does the goddess want to drink milk?"

"Well, it is so simple! Rama and Lakshmana being holy

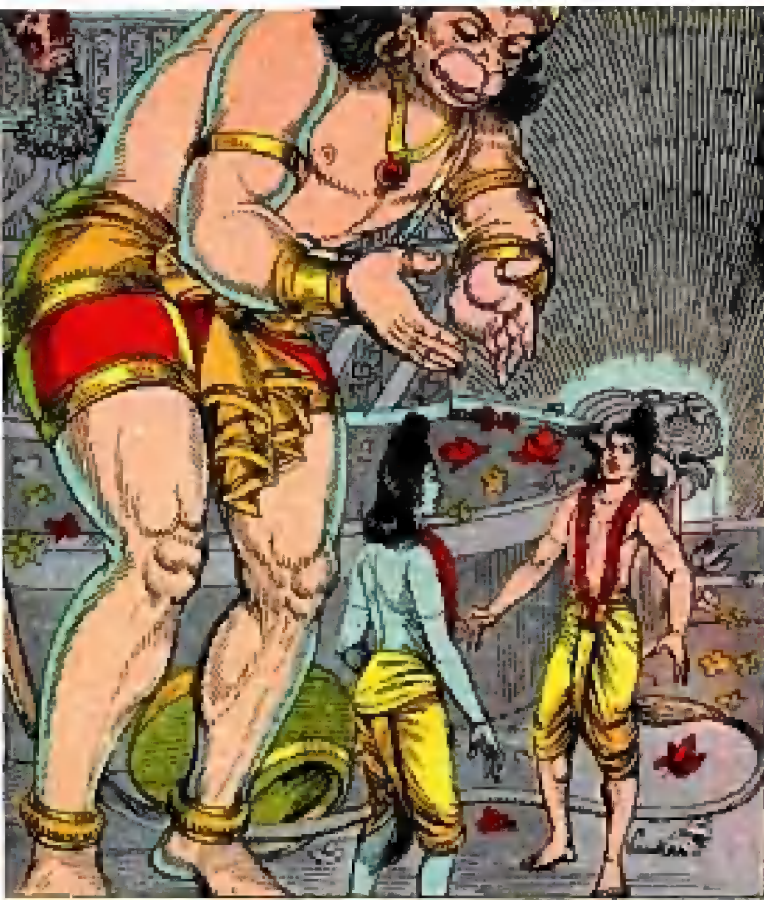


beings, wine would not go well with them. Hence Kali's choice of milk," replied Ahiravana.

"Great is your wisdom, my brother. Who else could have given me such a satisfactory explanation?" commented Mahiravana and he ordered the demons to fetch milk.

In a few minutes jarfuls of milk were brought and poured down through the hole. Below, Hanuman raised his mouth and drank the sweet milk to his heart's content. He felt a new vigour in his muscles and stood ready for action.

A little later Mahiravana stood at the entrance and said, "Mother Kali, can I now come



in for your worship?"

"Have patience, child," said Hanuman, "let your elder brother come in first!"

Mahiravana hastened to Ahiravana and said, "My brother, you are lucky. The goddess is pleased to receive you first!"

Ahiravana was delighted. He entered the lower chamber, carrying a huge golden dish with flowers, fruits and honey arranged in it.

Hanuman stood alert at the door. As soon as Ahiravana pushed open the door and stepped in, he shut the door.

Ahiravana had barely placed the dish before Kali when Hanuman caught him by his neck

from behind. Before the demon had found time to cry out, Hanuman's iron grip put an end to him.

Hanuman then sat down and made proper use of the fruits and honey the demon had brought. He now felt even stronger and kicked Ahiravana's deadbody away to a dark nook.

"Mahiravana! Do not waste time. Send Rama and Lakshmana to my presence. My favourite devotee, Ahiravana, will have the privilege of dedicating them to me. You may come in thereafter, followed by others, to sacrifice them."

Hanuman opened the door cautiously keeping himself hidden. Mahiravana pushed Rama and Lakshmana in.

Hanuman had slipped into darkness behind the image of Kali. He said, trying to sound weird, "O Princes of Ayodhya! Do not neglect to shut the door behind you!"

Lakshmana looked puzzled, Rama asked him with a smile, "Don't you understand, Lakshmana? Well, first lock the door."

Lakshmana did as instructed by Rama. Then he heard the weird voice calling them from the darkness behind the image.

They followed the direction and saw Hanuman bowing to them.

"Lakshmana! The moment I heard that the goddess was demanding milk instead of wine, I understood that our Hanuman had assumed the role of the goddess!"

Hanuman showed them the bows and arrows which the demons had kept before the image in order to get them blessed by the deity. Rama and Lakshmana picked up the bows and as many arrows as they could carry. The rest were held by Hanuman.

Outside the chamber, the demons were getting restive. They were eager to witness the rite in which Rama and Lakshmana were to be sacrificed. They wondered why Ahiravana did not open the door.

It was Kantaki who first entertained the misgiving that perhaps something was amiss inside the lower cave. She peeped down through the hole and was surprised to see no trace of the milk. She gave out a shriek.

"What is the matter, Kantaki? What do you see that you are shrieking like a trumpet? Did the deity express a desire to have you as a sacrifice?" asked Mahiravana.



"You fools! I have no doubt that someone has entered the deity's chamber. It must be Chandrasena who has helped the enemy to infiltrate into this secure fort. I must hurry and make her confess through torture," shouted Kantaki as she ran away.

The demons looked at each other, unable to decide what to do. They could not easily believe that an enemy had entered the deity's cave. On the other hand, it was surprising that Ahiravana did not answer their inquiry.

At last a horde of bold demons headed towards the chamber. But suddenly the door fell

to Hanuman's kick and Hanuman, with Rama and Lakshmana on his shoulders, emerged and gave out a roar.

"Enemy! Enemy is here!" shouted the demons. Rama and Lakshmana began to shoot arrows at them.

Mahiravana, who stood a few yards away, was taken aback. He picked up his bow and rushed at Hanuman.

There began a fierce exchange of arrows between Rama and Lakshmana on one side and Mahiravana on the other. Soon a strange phenomenon was observed. From each drop of blood that oozed out of Mahiravana's person, sprang to life a demon who looked exactly like Mahiravana. Thus, there

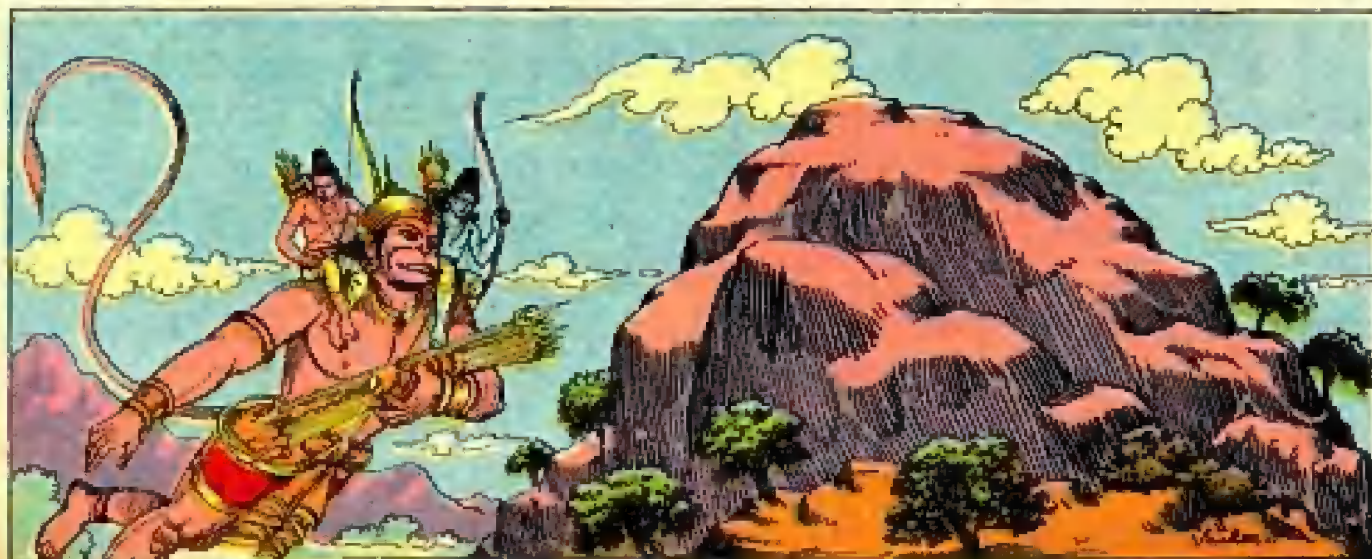
were produced innumerable Mahiravanas with whom Rama and Lakshmana had to fight.

"This is an intriguing situation. If we shed Mahiravana's blood, new demons are formed. But how to kill him without shedding a drop of his blood?" Rama asked Hanuman.

Hanuman suddenly remembered what Suvarchala Devi had told him. She had said that Chandrasena knew the secret of Mahiravana's life and death. He at once flew on to a mountain peak. Leaving Rama and Lakshmana there, he proceeded to meet Chandrasena.

From the peak Rama and Lakshmana continued to discharge arrows at the horde of emerging Mahiravanas.

Contd.





A BONFIRE!

Vasudev had prospered well as a trader in the town. But he had not forgotten his village. Not only did he retain his ancestral house in the village, but also he invested more and more money from time to time on his lands to raise better crops.

But one of his great ambitions was to improve the lot of the villagers. Most of the people in the village were innocent. But there were two or three fellows who derived joy in misleading them.

At the sunset the villagers used to assemble under a big banyan tree and discuss their problems. One day Vasudev told them, "During every monsoon when the river is in spate the flood water enters our fields and harms the crop. I propose that we raise the height of the embankment. I will bear half of the expense. The other

half should be borne by you collectively."

The villagers happily agreed to the proposal. But as soon as Vasudev departed, the mischief-makers told them, "Is Vasudev a fool to spend his money for our sake? He must be having some other motive. Probably he is thinking of buying up all the lands below the embankment and he wants to ensure that they are not affected by the flood."

The people backed out. When Vasudev saw that nobody was interested in the work, he thought it best to keep quiet.

A few months later he proposed, "The ditch that is there at the very entrance into our village causes much inconvenience to outsiders visiting our village. Why not we construct a bridge? I am willing to contribute two-third of the

money that should be spent for the work. The remaining one-third should be borne by the villagers, collectively."

"That is a nice idea," said the villagers. But as soon as Vasudev went away, the mischief-makers told them, "No doubt, Vasudev is going to buy some sort of a vehicle which he desires to use between the town and our village. So far as we are concerned, what do we care whether there is a bridge or not? Can't we plod through a few yards of mud and water?"

The villagers saw sense in what these people said and they did not cooperate with Vasudev in constructing a bridge.

A few months passed. One day Vasudev told the villagers, "The plot of land I have on the outskirts of the village is full of dry bushes. I won't mind if

someone made a bonfire of them!"

The same evening some of the villagers went and put fire to the dry bushes. There was a fierce wind which carried the sparks into the village. Consequently, a few thatched houses caught fire.

The villagers went to Vasudev and said, "Look at what has happened because we followed your advice!"

"My friends, whenever I gave you any constructive suggestion, you refused to accept it. But the moment I gave a funny and nonsensical proposal, you rushed to work it out. How is it that those who earlier dissuaded you from doing as I said, did not come forward to dissuade you from doing this unnecessary thing?"

The villagers kept quiet, realising their mistake.



WHAT DECEIVES US

Is it not surprising that at times even an intelligent or a wise man is deceived? How does such a thing happen?"

This was the question raised by a certain king. He looked for a convincing answer, but in vain. Neither his ministers nor his courtiers could satisfy him.

The question exercised the king so much that he announced that whoever could give him a convincing answer would receive a part of his kingdom as reward.

Days passed. One day a young man met him and told him in confidence, "I am from the neighbouring kingdom of Suryagarh. I know that the king of Suryagarh, Suryasen, is your enemy. I too look upon him as my enemy because he killed my father unjustly. Now, Suryasen, alone, is paying a visit to the forest tomorrow, to fulfil a vow before the goddess of the tribals. If you come alone in disguise, we both can capture him."

The king was delighted. As arranged, he reached a spot in the forest. Instantly he was captured by four strong men.

"I'm deceived!" shouted the king.

The young man appeared before him and said, "My lord, do you realise how you are deceived? It is the deception, ambition or greed in ourselves that lead us to be deceived."

The king kept his promise and gave the young man a part of his kingdom.





VISHNU'S SIGH AND LAKSHMI'S SMILE

One day Lord Vishnu and his consort, Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, were talking in a lighter vein.

"My lord, you are under the impression that your devotees are most faithful to you. But if they are given a choice between yourself and myself, most of them will surely choose me," claimed the goddess.

At first Vishnu smiled and kept quiet. But Lakshmi did not leave the matter at that. She repeated her observation.

Vishnu laughed and said, "Your impression about my devotees is quite wrong, I'm afraid. I bet, they are quite sincere and they can stand any test."

"Do you think so? All right then, let's take samples of them," proposed Lakshmi. Accordingly Vishnu and Lakshmi disguised themselves as a couple of wandering mendicants and entered a town, the capital of a certain kingdom which was populated by Vishnu's devotees.

It was a stormy night. First Vishnu went near the palacial house of a wealthy merchant and stood under the shed projected from its outer wall. The merchant was a devotee of Vishnu and he happened to see Vishnu, who looked like a fellow-devotee.

"Why are you standing in the rain? Please come in. I will

feel honoured to have you as my guest to night," said the merchant while opening the gate of his house.

Vishnu entered the house. The merchant served him a sumptuous dinner and asked him to choose any of the so many empty rooms in his house to retire for the night.

Vishnu chose a small room, saying that that one would be particularly suitable for his meditation.

The merchant's servants spread a bed for the guest in the room of his choice. Vishnu locked the door from inside and thought, "My devotee has lodged me comfortably. I do not know where is Lakshmi and how is she treated!"

Lakshmi knew Vishnu's movements and she too approached the merchant's house. As soon as the merchant saw her, he opened his door and welcomed her in.

Lakshmi came in and took her seat and said, "I am feeling thirsty. Can you bring me some water?"

The merchant, who already stood charmed by Lakshmi's beauty, immediately fetched water in a tumbler.

Lakshmi brought out of her



bag a golden cup studded with diamonds and poured the water the merchant brought into it. After she had finished drinking water from her own cup, she threw the cup away.

The merchant was surprised. Lakshmi then asked for more water and when the same was brought she brought out yet another bejewelled golden cup from her bag and used it for drinking and then threw it away. No more could the merchant keep his curiosity under check. "Why are you throwing away those precious cups?" he asked.

"Well, I never use the same cup twice," replied the disguised

goddess of wealth.

The merchant had already been much impressed by Lakshmi's charming looks. Her opulence and lavishness now made him speechless. "Only if I could persuade this beautiful lady to give up her asceticism and stay in my house permanently!" he told himself.

Lakshmi refused to touch any food. The merchant then asked her to choose any room she would like to occupy. Lakshmi chose the very room earlier occupied by Vishnu. The merchant informed her that he had far better rooms to spare and that the particular room she

chose had already been occupied by another guest.

"I must have this room or I must go away," said Lakshmi.

The merchant instantly started banging on Vishnu's door.

"I am sitting for meditation. Do you forget that I'm a devotee of Vishnu? How dare you disturb me?" shouted Vishnu from the interior of the room.

"Go to hell, you and your Vishnu," shouted the merchant and he ordered his servants to break open the door.

He was duly obeyed. When the disguised Vishnu still hesitated to leave the room, he was bodily thrown into the street.



"Will you fetch some water from the river yourself? I wish to perform a certain rite," said Lakshmi. The merchant went out willingly. Lakshmi hurriedly left his house and joined Vishnu in the street.

"Did you see, my lord? I being the goddess of wealth, I command far more attention of the people than you do!" observed Lakshmi.

Vishnu kept quiet.

As they walked on, they saw a Vishnu temple. "Here is a shrine entirely dedicated to myself. I can now prove my superiority to Lakshmi," thought Vishnu and he said, "Why don't we take rest in this temple for a day?"

"Why not?" replied Lakshmi. It was morning. Soon the temple opened and the priest performed the deity's ritual worship. A number of devotees came and submitted their offerings. Vishnu was quite pleased.

The priest closed the shrine at noon. That was the instruction of the king, the founder of the temple. It was to open again after the sunset.

It so happened that the king wished that particular day to try his priest and see how far he adhered to the rules of the



temple. He disguised himself as a trader and approached the priest soon after the temple had been closed and said, "I desire to have a glimpse of the deity. Will you please open the door?"

"You have to wait till evening. It is the king's order to keep the temple closed from noon to sunset," replied the priest.

"I wished to offer a thousand rupees to the deity. What a pity that my wish must remain unfulfilled, for, I cannot wait till the sunset!" said the trader and he turned to go.

A thousand rupees was a big sum to come from a single devotee. The priest thought that

the king need not know about the concession he was going to make for the trader. To refuse the trader would be to refuse the blessings of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth! He opened the door and the grateful trader offered two thousand rupees.

The king returned to the palace and shed his disguise and summoned the priest. Vishnu and Lakshmi accompanied him invisibly.

"Priest! Are you properly observing the rules of the temple?" asked the king.

"To the best of my ability, my lord!" said the priest.

"You never show any special favour to any devotee, like allowing someone entry into the temple during the forbidden hours, do you?" asked the king again.

The priest guessed that the

king had got scent of what he had done a little while before.

"My lord! If the queen comes and knocks on your door while you are interned in your chamber, will you not open the door?" he asked.

"Of course, I will!" replied the king.

"Something similar happened today. While Lord Vishnu was relaxing, his consort, the goddess of wealth, came and knocked on his door. I had to open the door on his behalf. The proof of the visit of the goddess is there inside the temple, in the form of two thousand rupees!" replied the priest.

The king burst into a hearty laugh and gave a reward to the priest for his wit.

Vishnu and Lakshmi soon left the palace. Vishnu sighed while Lakshmi smiled.



A Lesson from the Stars

King Vajrapal of Surgarh was a much ambitious king. He desired to become an emperor. He led his army into the neighbouring kingdoms and conquered a number of them.

But his desire for conquest was not satisfied. After a year he prepared for another expedition. His ministers and generals all praised his braveness.

The one who did not appreciate the king's greed for others' territory was his own daughter, Princess Purnarekha.

Before leading the expedition the king came to meet the princess. It was evening and she was in the garden. Coming closer to her, the king noticed that she was looking at the sky.

"What are you gazing at, my daughter?" asked the king.

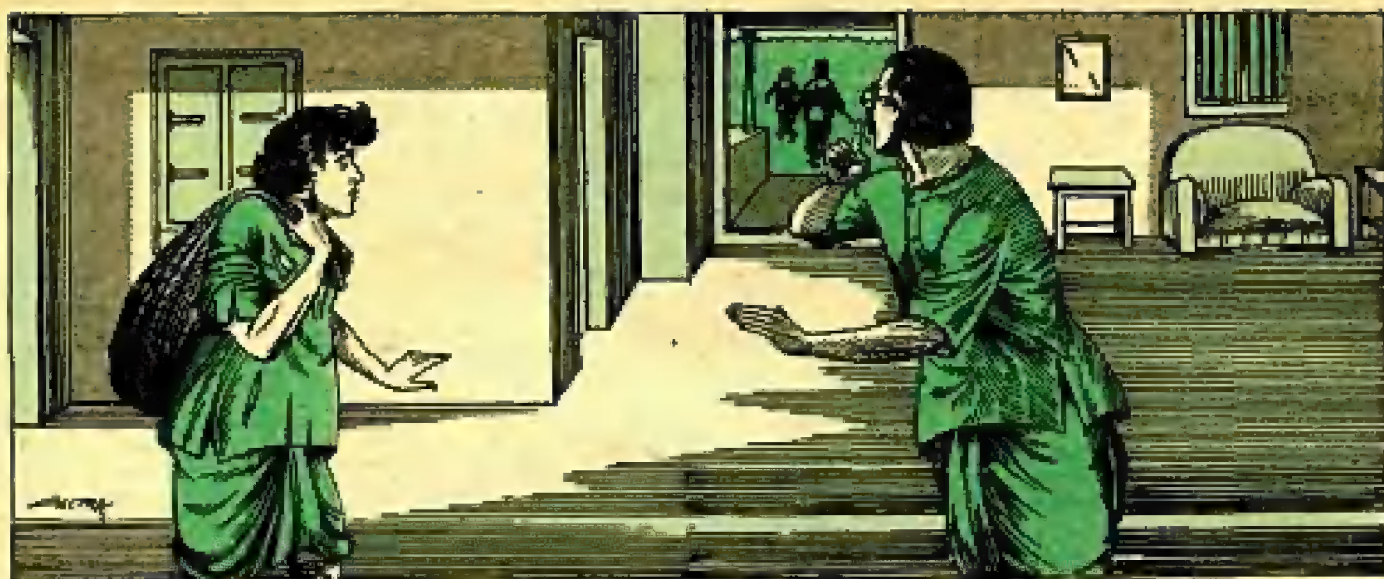
"The stars!" replied the princess.

"Why?" asked the king.

"Well, they are mighty heavenly bodies. And there is limitless space for them to move about. But each one remains fixed to its own spot or path, never violating the law. But it is so different with men!" the princess said and sighed.

The king saw the wisdom in his daughter's words. He gave up his plan of violating others' lands.





THE CRAFTY MISER

Suresh had enough money. But he was such a miser that it was difficult to find his equal. If he continued to be a bachelor, it was because he did not wish to spend a paisa on raising a family.

He should have remained content with that. But he was not. He dreamt of more money—money that should come in an easy way. And soon he hit upon a wretched plan.

He took a young beggar into confidence and briefed him what was required of him to do. The beggar agreed to work for him on the promise of a handsome reward.

At night, when the entire village had gone to sleep, Suresh

shouted, "Thief, there escapes a thief! Ho, ho! Catch the thief!"

In no time a number of neighbours gathered. Suresh opened his rear door and the people could see a shadowy figure disappearing into the fields. They gave him a chase, but could not catch him.

The beggar, as instructed by Suresh, entered the houses of two of the neighbours who had come to Suresh's rescue leaving their houses unlocked in the hurry. He ransacked the houses and returned to his master's house carrying the booty, after the neighbours had left.

"I hope, nobody has seen you bringing these things here!" said Suresh.

"How could anybody have seen me? They were here when I entered their houses. I stealthily entered your compound just when they were leaving through your front door," answered the beggar gleefully.

"Well done, boy, now you may go and relax," advised Suresh.

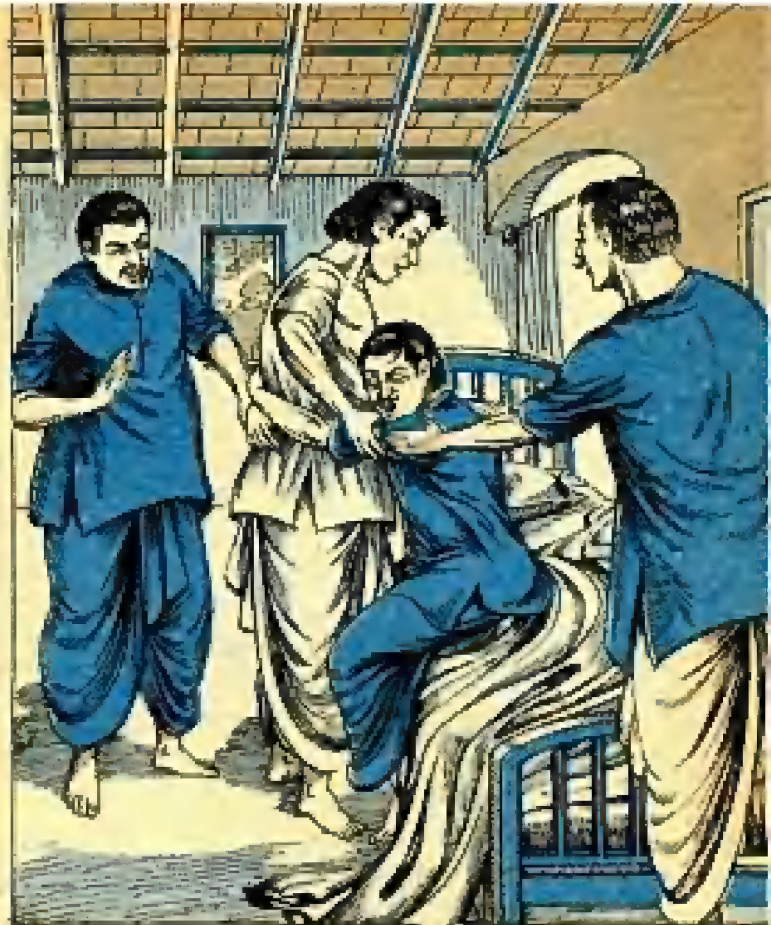
"Thank you. But what about my reward?" asked the beggar.

"Your reward is safe with me. If I hand it over to you in kind, you will find it difficult to carry it about. Better wait for two days. I will go to the town and sell these things. Then I can give you your share in cash," Suresh assured the beggar.

"All right. Till then I will continue to lie on your veranda," said the beggar.

At midnight Suresh shouted again, "Thief, the thief escapes!" Soon the neighbours collected in his house. Suresh clung to one of them and shouted while pretending to shiver, "Thief! the thief!"

The neighbours thought that poor Suresh had a nightmare due to his experience of the previous night. One of them consoled him, saying, "Do not worry, Suresh, last night my

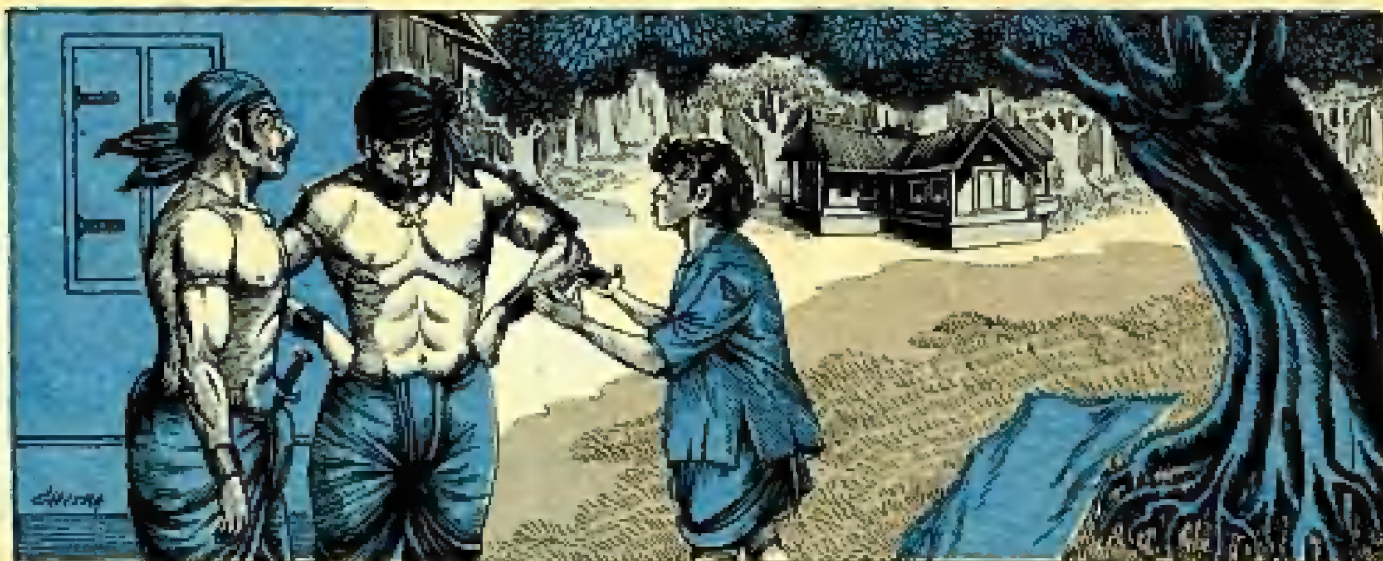


house too was plundered besides our neighbour's. We villagers must guard the village at night by turns."

Next day Suresh went to the town to sell the stolen goods. Upon his return in the evening, the beggar asked him for his reward.

"How can I give you any reward, my boy? Did you not hear me shouting last night? A thief entered my house and took away whatever you had deposited with me!" answered Suresh.

The beggar understood Suresh's trick. He kept quiet, but hiding in a bush he observed



through the window where Suresh kept his money.

The beggar knew two highly accomplished thieves. He met them and told them how he had been hoodwinked by Suresh and where Suresh had kept the money he had received by selling the stolen goods.

At night the thieves swooped down upon Suresh's house and

relieved him of all his cash. He shouted, "Thieves! Thieves!!" The villagers heard him all right, but they concluded that he had only had another experience of nightmare. Nobody responded to his screams.

The beggar duly received his share. In fact he received much more than he had expected to receive from Suresh!

This is to remind our readers that the entries they send either for the Photo-Caption Contest or the Story-Title Contest must be **per post-card alone** and not by any other means, envelope or inland letter card.

Secondly, entries for the two competitions must come separately—not by the same post-card.

We will not be surprised if our judges consider the violation of these principles as disqualifications.

—Publisher

MONUMENTS OF INDIA

PAGODAS OF MAHABALIPURAM

Mahabalipuram on the sea, about sixty-four kilometres from Madras, is a charming place with chariot-shaped pagodas carved out of a hillock. Any monument is built from its base. But these pagodas were made beginning with their peak. They were carved downward, with the hillock cut and chiselled. The largest of these pagodas, eleven metres high, is dedicated to Yudhissthira. The rest are dedicated to Bhima, Arjuna, and Draupadi.

Nearby can be seen, carved on a gigantic rock-face, several important events from the epics.

Touching the sea stands a beautiful solitary shrine, known as the Shore temple.

Built under the patronage of the Pallava King, Narasimha Verman, these monuments speak of a highly advanced school of sculpture that had flourished fifteen hundred years ago.





TO WASH ONE'S HANDS OF A THING

When Jesus Christ, with his message of truth and love, shook the very foundation of his society, the orthodox people got quite upset. The land of Christ, Palestine, was then ruled by Romans who too grew intolerant of Jesus' popularity. They were afraid that Jesus might rouse the people against their authority.

A misguided mob at last took hold of Jesus and produced him before Pilate, the Roman Governor. Pilate realised that they were determined to put an end to Jesus' life. He also realised that later it would be thought that it was he who ordered or at least sanctioned the punishment. But he did not wish to be known as a party to the episode. He brought some water and washed his hands before the crowd and declared, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it."

So, if one gets involved in some business but finds that things are not going the way he wished, he says, "I wash my hands of the thing." Thereby one disclaims all responsibility in the affair.





LET US KNOW

Can you kindly shed some light on what is known as the Loch Ness Monster?

Partho Chakraborty, Chembur, Bombay.

A lake is called a loch in Scotland. Ness is the name of a lake. Since olden days the local people have continued to believe that deep under the water of the lake live some gigantic creatures. It was in 1933 that a gentleman while strolling on the bank of the lake happened to see a huge head rising from the water. Luckily he had a camera in his hand and he managed to click it before the object disappeared from his view.

The creature in his picture, seen in silhouette, somewhat resembles the neck and the head of a giraffe. It created a great sensation and grew famous as the picture of the Loch Ness Monster. Teams of scientists began to investigate into the mystery of the so called monster. From time to time other people, including a group of students, had glimpses of the creature. In 1961 was formed the Loch Ness Phenomenon Investigation Bureau. According to a letter of the Bureau's Executive Director, published in THE TIMES of London on 28 September 1970, the existence of an unusual creature in Loch Ness cannot be ruled out.

Another thorough investigation was made recently by a team of scientists in collaboration with an American newspaper. Sophisticated detection instruments including cameras and sound-recorders were kept lowered in the water for a long time. Nothing conclusive has been proved. A reward of one million pounds offered by a Scotch industrialist for those who can capture the monster remains unclaimed.

(Readers are requested not to send new questions for a few months. Let your magazine finish answering at least a part of the backload of questions.)

CHOOSE A TITLE AND WIN A REWARD

(You are invited to choose a title for the following story and write it down on a post card and mail it to 'Story-title contest', Chandamama, 2 & 3, Arcot Road, Madras-600 026, to reach us by the 20th August. A reward of Rs. 25-00 will go to the best entry, which will be published in the October issue. Please do not use the same card for entering the photo-caption contest.)



At the foot of the hill there was a nice little restaurant. We, a group of college students, had been to the top of the hill for picnic. By the time we came down, it had started drizzling.

We took shelter in the restaurant and ordered the waiter for cups of tea.

It was twilight. Suddenly a bear came into the restaurant and dragged a chair and sat down.

"Waiter, will you please get me a cup of very hot coffee?" said the bear. Then he lighted a cheroot and looking at us with his bleary eyes, commented, "Silly weather!"

We sat speechless. Soon the waiter put a steaming cup before the bear. The bear took a sip and said, "It is not coffee, but tea!"

"I'm sorry," said the waiter and took the tea back and soon returned with coffee.

As he passed by us, one of us muttered, "It is simply surprising, isn't it?"

"Not quite," said the waiter. "I often make such mistakes. The other day a customer ordered for cake, but I brought him bread!"

Result of Story Title Contest held in June Issue

The prize is awarded to:

Mrs. M. Paranjoti,

House E - 71, S.B.I. Colony,

KAKINADA - 533 003.

Winning Entry — 'THE CONNECTING LINK'

PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST



Mr. S. B. Takalkar



Mr. Bal Pawaskar

- These two photographs are somewhat related. Can you think of suitable captions? Could be single words, or several words, but the two captions must be related to each other.
- Rs. 20 will be awarded as prize for the best caption. Remember, your entry must reach us by 20th AUGUST
- Winning captions will be announced in SEPTEMBER Issue.
- Write your entry on a POST CARD, specify the month, give your full name address, age and post to:

PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST
CHANDAMAMA MAGAZINE
MADRAS-600 026.

Result of Photo Caption Contest held in June Issue

The Prize is awarded to:

Kumari Madhavi, K.N.

45/A Gandhi Nagar, Vijaya Nilayam,

SECUNDERABAD - 500 003.

Winning Entry - 'Going to Learn' - 'Waiting to Earn'

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